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Socialism and the servile state

[London]

1911

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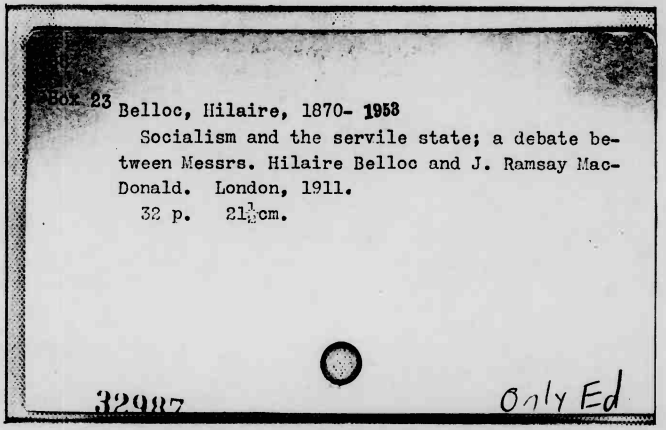
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Socialism and the Servile State

A DEBATE

BETWEEN MESSRS.

HILAIRE BELLOC and

J. RAMSAY MacDONALD, M.P.

THE SOUTH WEST LONDON FEDERATION
OF THE INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY.
— 1911. —

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SOCIALISM and the SERVILE STATE.

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EXPLANATORY NOTE.

That the unreality of the Collectivist ideal is apparent from the fact that contemporary Collectivist effort is leading, not to Collectivism, but to the Servile State.

THE Debate on the above proposition, of which a Verbatim Report is here given, was held at the Memorial Hall, London, E.C., on Friday, May 5, 1911, under the auspices of the South-West London Federation of the Independent Labour Party. Mr. Hilaire Belloc took the affirmative and Mr. J. Ramsay MacDonald, M.P., the negative. Mr. A. G. Gardiner (Editor of the "Daily News") presided over an audience which packed the Hall; an audience which contained, among its number, people of widely differing opinions about the subject of Debate; an audience which, though keenly interested, was a very orderly one indeed. Neither of the Disputants require any lengthy introduction: Mr. Belloc was (1906-10) Liberal M.P. for South Salford, and is a prominent man of letters; Mr. MacDonald is a well-known member of the I.L.P., has been Secretary to the Labour Party since its inception, and is the present Chairman of its Parliamentary Group. I have only to add that this Report has been approved by both gentlemen.

H. M.

May, 1911.

(Copies of this Report may be obtained, direct, from Herbert Morrison, 51, Sidney Road, Stockwell, S.W.; The National Labour Press, 30, Blackfriars Street, Manchester, and 23, Bride Lane, London, E.C.; or through any Bookseller. Single copies, by post, 2½d.; wholesale terms on application.)

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VERBATIM REPORT.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and gentlemen, we are met tonight to hear, I suppose, the oldest debate in the world. When the first man looked out at Creation—I am beginning a little far back, but you need not feel concerned on that account—when the first man looked out on Creation there was one subject that probably filled his mind. That subject was the Mystery of the Universe in which he found himself placed. He saw the glory of the sun by day and the mystery of the stars by night, he saw the pageant of the seasons pass before him, he heard the voice of the thunder-cloud, and saw the sword of the lightning stab the earth, and in the presence of all this splendid spectacle he fashioned his thoughts of God and the omnipotent powers that encompassed him. But when he ceased to dwell alone, he found other things to talk about. He began to discuss his fellowman. He began, in a word, a debate on Socialism, and he has been debating it ever since, and he will go on debating it, I fancy, until the last two men, who will probably be a Jew and a Chinaman, sit over the embers of the last fire to catch the latest breath of the expiring atmosphere. For the subject is eternal and inexhaustible. It is at the foundation of the whole history of human society. The history of society is, in the first place, an attempt to discover how we may live decently and comfortably with our fellowmen. We are told to go and learn of the ant. I believe the ants and the bees have solved the problem. They have solved it on a strictly Socialist and Collectivist basis. They recognise nothing and they have nothing but a collective conscience, and any individualist who turned up among them would suffer a very short shrift. Anyone who knows, who is familiar with, a hive will be familiar with those scenes when the workers bundle the drones out on the ground beneath and leave them to crawl about and starve. There is a moral, no doubt, in that, even for human society, but after all men are not ants and bees. They are not instinctive and automatic Socialists or Collectivists. The first and foremost fact about man is that he is an individual, with personal aims and thoughts, and purposes and passions and appetites. He insists on individual liberty. He is, in fact, a solitary individual whose ultimate fastness is never really penetrated by his fellows. Even in his punishments he is alone. "The sins ye do by two and two are

paid for one by one." Well, that being so, he is therefore clearly differentiated from our friends the ants, but at the same time, so ridiculous a creature is he, that while Individualist to begin with, he insists on becoming a social animal. He is gregarious in his habits and interdependent in his nature, and that being so it becomes necessary for him to subordinate his personal aims and his individual will in a very large degree and in a multitude of aspects to the general necessities and the common interests of the society in which he lives. There's the rub. There is the cause of that eternal conflict which has been waged in all countries and in all ages and will go on being waged until we cease to be. Well now, into this great argument it is fortunately not my duty to enter. I am here simply as a sort of Buffer State between the belligerents. I am a friend of both the Montagues and Capulets. I keep the ring and take care that there are no illegitimate blows struck, and that the victory goes—to whomsoever it goes—as the result of an honourable combat. Neither of the combatants needs any introduction to any English audience. They are known wherever our language is spoken as among the leading and foremost figures intellectually of our time. Just one word I may say as to the procedure. Mr. Belloc will open by speaking to the motion which is in his name, and he will speak for half-an-hour. Then Mr. MacDonald will reply for half-an-hour. Mr. Belloc will have a further twenty minutes, Mr. MacDonald a further twenty minutes; and finally, there will be ten minutes each. I now call upon Mr. Belloc to open.

Mr. BELLOC: I am going to ask you, Mr. Chairman, and ladies and gentlemen, with an insufficient voice, to follow so far as I am concerned—and I am sure so far as Mr. MacDonald is concerned, for he is a Scotchman—a certain process of reasoning, and I am going to beg you—I have no need to beg him—to permit the discussion to follow those particular lines which follow from its definition. I am sorry for this, for this is to give pain and not pleasure. I am not here to argue against the Collectivist theory. I am not here to-night to say that I think it is of this or of that general good or evil nature. I am here to defend a particular and positive thesis, and Mr. MacDonald is here to destroy that thesis. I want you to note it very clearly at the beginning of the discussion, not only because that thesis is the object, the material, of what we are dealing with to-night in this particular debate, but because it is, in my opinion at least, by far the most practical matter, by far (I prefer to say) the most immediate and

real matter in the politics of Western Europe, to-day. I maintain that the effort of Collectivist idealism and of Collectivist speakers, writers, and thinkers, is having as its result, not as its object, with the material with which it disposes—to wit, human nature, and especially Western European human nature—not the establishment of the Collectivist or Socialist State, nor an approach thereto, but the establishment of what I shall call the Servile State. And I shall begin by defining my terms when I use the words the Servile State. I take it that man—though it is not necessary to my definition; it is necessary to an explanation of my thought—I take it that man demands in the economic sphere two things, which I will call Sufficiency and Security. Let no one pretend that those things need a strict and absolute definition. But each of us, by examining himself, knows at once that not where property is concerned, or the sense of property, but where mere consumption is concerned, we all of us feel a necessity, a craving, for enough and the continuance of enough. I have never met a man, I won't say who said, but I have never met a man who felt, that he wanted economic equality. I don't want it, and I don't think there is anybody in this room who wants it.

ONE IN THE AUDIENCE: Oh!

Mr. BELLOC: No, economic equality, no. I don't believe there is anyone in this room who says: "I am comfortable; I have all I need; it will continue as long as I live, and my children shall have it after me—that is, five hundred a year—but how enviously I hate that man with a thousand a year!" That attitude of mind does not exist. That is not a human type. We do not feel thus about economic things, but we do feel to the marrow of our bones the desire for Sufficiency and Security. To say that we desire an absolute sufficiency is nonsense. You cannot define sufficiency. It is a certain minimum differing, I won't say with individuals, but certainly with traditions; and where the society is unhappily split, as English society is unhappily split, into various strata of differing traditions, you will find that within each stratum that feeling for the minimum is so strong that men brought up to a certain minimum, which is often far too much for any man really to want, will run the most terrible risks in order to obtain it for themselves and their children. As for security, every man born knows how strong the appetite for that is. Whether it be the thousand a year that a man is getting as Editor of a great newspaper of a Socialist tendency, or the hundred a year that a man is getting as a

fairly skilled artisan, or the fourteen shillings a week which a man is getting as an agricultural labourer, once his standard is established, once his children are at least fed, clothed, housed—his domestic hearth founded on that basis—the security of it is essential to him and is perhaps the strongest craving he has. Very well. To establish a minimum security and a minimum sufficiency (you cannot get them absolute, and I do not pretend to define them) to meet in a substantial and sufficient way these two cravings is the work of any sane body of men in the economic sphere. When it fails on the economic side the body politic is sick. When it is absent, the body politic may be near its death and is certainly in a high fever. It is absent in England to-day. It is absent in North Germany, it is absent, especially in the original Puritan States of the United States, and there are patches of the cancer in France and in Italy, a few in Spain, and only one, I am glad to say, thank God, in Ireland. For this disease—which I may add, in passing, affects that part of the Lowlands between the Grampians and the high, deserted places of the Border—for this disease a remedy has been proposed to which a number of those now listening to me are attached, and to which Mr. MacDonald is attached. It is Collectivism. You say, and you are right in saying, that a phenomenon accompanying the insecurity and the insufficiency which the mass of men in industrial society feel to-day, and a phenomenon that is the proximate cause if not the ultimate cause of it, is the possession of the means of production by a minority. I have heard it denied, but I have never heard it denied by anybody who counted. I have heard it denied, but I have only heard it denied by the kind of people whose denial is a little help to any cause which they oppose—not a great help but a little help. And you propose—I say you; I am not addressing the audience at large; I never insult a large number of people, even when they are without weapons—but you that are Collectivists propose to settle this business by the putting of the means of production into the hands of the politicians, or, as you say, the community. The community is an abstraction; the politician is a reality, but no matter. I fully recognise this, that were you to do so the problem would be solved. Those of you who enjoy the full possession of your intelligence—I am not insulting you—will appreciate that there are other ideal, possible, hypothetical solutions. You may say that only yours is the practical one and the only one exactly consonant to the nature of man. You may say that millions of men naturally come together so easily, and so directly express their general view, that politicians will always obey them, even in detail. Perhaps

I should agree, or perhaps not, but you cannot deny the mere theory that there are other solutions. One of those is the solution which has been attempted by the whole human race with the exception of those who have accepted the institution of slavery. The other is the solution which has been adopted by the whole human race where it has accepted the institution of slavery. The first solution is the seeing to it that a determining mass—I suppose in the ideal case every member—that at any rate the determining mass of society shall be possessed as individuals, or as corporations, regarded as free agents within the State, of the means of production. That was the ideal of the Middle Ages, and that is to-day the ideal, for instance, of China and of India. Another way of doing it—and it is that which I want to define—is the Servile State. You recognise, or if necessary you impose, a state of society in which the mass of your inhabitants—I won't say your citizens—are permanently dispossessed of the means of production. You differentiate the community into two classes, those who possess the means of production and those who do not. But you get security and sufficiency for all by organisation. You see to it, if you are humane, that the man who is not in possession of the means of production shall not be oppressed and that the punishments that will compel him to work are moderate and not excessive. You see to it that he lives the life which happens to suit your own particular ideal of the minimum of human comfort, but you do not put the means of production into his hands, directly or indirectly. He is a slave. Whether you use the word or whether you do not, that acceptation of one class permanently in possession of the means of production, and another side by side with it permanently dispossessed of the same, is what makes the Servile State, and that is what makes the slave class. And the other people, who own the means of production, you conversely, by the very act of creating a slave class, confirm in their possession of the means of production. You make them stronger in their citadel than before; you may prevent their being cruel; you may prevent everything which you do not like on the fringes of their action, but you do not take away their capital, and you do not take away their land. I hope I have defined the Servile State clearly. By my definition, if you should wake up to-morrow to find that all those millions of English men and women who possess no land or capital and who work at a weekly wage were confirmed in that wage for ever, and their children after them were looked after when in school, were looked after in old age, but never allowed to get capital or land, while, on the other hand the class that have it

shall remain having it, you would wake up to find England not a Socialist State at all but a Servile State. Is that clear? Many people love that ideal. I do not say I dislike it. I have seen slaves in my life, and a greater man, if I may say so without egotism, Aristotle, was at the pains of remarking—I hope he did not mean it—something which the Catholic Church has denied with her dogmas—that certain men are born slaves. I do not say the Servile State is a bad thing, but at any rate it is not Collectivism. I was going to say it is not the S.D.F., but at any rate it is not Collectivism or Socialism. You are out—you who are Socialists are out—for a particular object, and I bear you this testimony, not as an opponent, but as a great sympathiser with all that is in your work parallel to the movement of democracy for the last hundred years: you not only fight for what is true, but you are capable of defending what you believe, and you desire to Collectivise, to Socialise, to put into public hands—the hands of the politicians, that is—the means of production. If you do not do that, you fail, and the more you stereotype the state of society in which the community does not own the means of production, the more you have failed. The further you go from it, the further have you failed in Socialism. Very well. My next point, in the fourteen minutes that remain, is this. Out of the Servile State we came. There is no record of a Western European society which until the birth of that Personality which, by a private idiosyncrasy, I shall call Our Lord, was not upon a basis of servility, and I am not using the word servile—please remember this—in any bad sense. As Mr. MacDonald is a Scotchman, and therefore a clear thinker, I know he won't accuse me of that. It may be a very good thing to be a slave or to have slaves, or a slave class, or (by a prettier term) a servile class, just as it may be a nicer thing to have "labour colonies" than penal settlements for such of the proletariat as won't work for the capitalist. However. In what we—people like me—call, in our vulgar nomenclature, changed by the hypnosis of our religion, in what we call Pagan times, Western Europe reposed upon the servile basis. That was not only true of the civilised but also of the barbarian people. They could not think in other terms, just as Lloyd George cannot think in other terms. They had to think of employer and employed as being two different classes. They had to think of the freeman and the slave as distinct portions of the community. There fell upon that way of organising the economic business and that way of securing sufficiency and security—for those cravings were the human driving forces that produced slavery—a certain influence which I shall not be at length to define, for I am not

here to talk history at any length, though history is the object lesson of all politics. Under this influence, that of the Catholic Church, the slave disappeared, and the disappearance of the servile class between, let us say, 600 to 700 and 1,300 and 1,400—in that slow process of seven or eight hundred years—is the big economic phenomenon of Western Europe. At the end of it the mass of Western European men, the determining mass of families, owned capital and land. It may be a bad thing for the man to own the house in which he lives, the soil which he tills, the instrument with which he works, either individually or co-operatively, in a guild, but anyhow free from the domination of his central government. Maybe it was bad to have men thus economically free—bad or good that society existed. And it broke down. It did not break down before a revolution in morals and in theology, but after a revolution in morals and in theology, and as a consequence of the revolution in morals and in theology. And after four hundred years of entertaining experiments, each of which has been more painful than the last, you are now arrived at a state of society which, in those countries which have abandoned tradition, you very well know cannot endure. I want to tell you people who think any province of Europe, even one so warped, can be transformed into a Collectivist society that as a matter of fact, when you deal with the material to your hand it turns all your efforts; and you transmute it (against your will) not into the Collectivist State, but into the Servile State. That is my point. Now what is the importance of that? If I were a Colonial, I should say that it had an importance from the point of view of Pragmatism, but being a civilised European I do not use terms of that sort. It is not of importance from the point of view of Pragmatism, because Pragmatism is bosh: it is a term used by people who do not use the grey matter of their brains, who do not "grip." The fact that you cannot and are not producing the Collectivist State has the importance which we all of us discover in any action of ours when we deal with the real universe. If, having learned too much or too little mathematics, but never having been to London, I say the straightest line from this hall here to St. Pancras, though it runs through a large number of houses is, in time, the shortest way to get there, experience will prove me to be wrong. If I pretend, as many young men do, that man is an absolute sort of being and that, let us say, ladies who have no votes have no power in the State, life will prove me to be wrong. If I pretend that good living, good eating, good drinking, heavy sleeping, happy holidays will

make me happy at fifty, life will prove me to be wrong. That does not mean that logical deduction is a mistake, but that there is a very large number of first principles in the universe and that only God—if you will allow me to use the term—is capable of comprehending them all. That is the opposite of Pragmatism, because Pragmatism depends upon a pluralistic universe.

I now wish you to turn to this phenomenon, and I purposely put it at the end of this first section of the debate that I may get matter for replying to from Mr. MacDonald. You have laboriously built up, in books, in journalism, and in some, at least, of the Parliaments—they're none of them worth much—of Western Europe a Socialist propaganda. And at what have you arrived by it? You have municipal enterprise. You have it only by borrowing from the capitalist. You have never confiscated; you have never dared to confiscate; you have never tried to confiscate. You borrow from the capitalist, and you offer the capitalist interest upon his capital, whether the enterprise pays or whether it does not. You point to those enterprises, with their sinking funds of course, but you have in Western Europe as a whole, this. When you began all this wonderful work, the capitalist had not got his grip to any large extent upon the municipalities and corporate life of the towns of Western Europe. To-day you are earning—according to statistics; you can play with them, but roughly it is this—you are earning 1.8 per cent. and you are paying 3.2 per cent. You do not only borrow tramcars, copper wires and granite setts for tramways which pay, you also borrow very largely for experiments that do not pay, for wash-houses that hardly pay, for libraries that are not intended to pay; you borrow bricks, mortar, tiles, glass, at interest, although these things do not breed. There has been no advance towards that prime action, that virile thing, without which Socialism is worthless—confiscation. And not only have you not begun it, but you are going further and further away from it. Last night, in the House of Commons, there was brought in a Bill which is roughly to this effect, and I believe it is accepted by what is called "all parties" (which always means a tiny minority of the English people), you are going by this Bill to put for the purposes of insurance against the accidents of modern capitalism—in other words, for establishing security to the capitalist on his side and the proletarian on his—£9,200,000 of taxation per year on the shoulders of the working classes. You are going to put a somewhat smaller taxation upon the shoulders of the employing classes: and what is called the State, that is,

every man who drinks a glass of beer or cup of tea, or smokes a pipe of tobacco, is going to provide something more. There are individuals who would resist that kind of thing, but you Socialists will accept it, and you will be by that step further from the ideal of Collectivism. You cannot but be further from it. It is not my ideal. I am not here to-night defending it or opposing it. You know very well that personally I am opposed to it, but at any rate my argument stands, that if your ideal were consonant to the nature of man, and if this putting of the means of production into the hands of the politicians were a normal, a safe, solution of the problem, as contrasted with—though I am not introducing that to-night; that is a side issue, but it is perhaps the main issue of all—as contrasted with the proper distribution of the means of production in ownership, co-operative and private, throughout the people; then that Collectivist ideal fails in this, that when you begin to legislate and try to apply it to men, your instruments slip off their material. The tool slips off the metal. Your theory is not chosen with a knowledge of the stuff with which it has to deal, and human nature, in all its little ways and instincts, pushes you off into something other and worse than you intended. Catch my argument well before I sit down. I have still exactly a minute. My argument is this. All your reforms which touch the proletariat in industrial society tend, not to a Collectivist State at all, but to a Servile State; that is, to a State in which the mass not to-day possessed, and increasingly for the last four hundred years dispossessed, in industrial Europe, of the means of production shall be confirmed in sufficiency and security, in having enough and in being sure of having enough; but shall not advance at all towards the possession, collectively or individually, of the means of production. That is my point. And I add as corollary to that plain fact which all can see before them that this fact is a proof that your theory which demands the Collectivising or Socialising of the means of production is as a workable and human thing untrue. It does not work with the stuff of humanity. Very well. That is my thesis, and I want Mr. MacDonald in his reply, only for my sake and the sake of the audience, to avoid three things. I do not want him to say it is an aid to Collectivism to create a servile class, because it is not. When you make a very large number of people, millions of people, comfortable you are not making people who will rebel against capitalists. Secondly, I hope he won't say—because it will give me a lot of trouble for nothing—that these movements towards the Servile

State are not there, because they are. If he says in his reply that they are not, then in my reply I shall bring a certain number of things which I think will startle him, not only from this country but from Germany and from France. Thirdly, I do not want him to say that the Servile State actually is the Collectivist State, because it isn't.

Mr. RAMSAY MacDONALD: Mr. Chairman and friends, it is always a great pleasure to meet my friend Belloc, whether it is at dinner or in debate. He has been genial, he has been facetious, he has been original, he has been obscure, but nevertheless I think he has committed a sufficient amount of indiscretions and promulgated a sufficient number of errors to give me an opportunity of asking you to listen to me for half-an-hour. He had, as you will have noticed, a glimmering idea—whether it was rational or conscientious I do not quite know—before he sat down as to what lines my reply was to go upon, and like an old and well-trained soldier he took the precaution to tell me that if I replied as I ought to reply he would consider it was no reply at all. Well, Belloc and I are old friends, and I will draw upon that friendship to tell him that I am going to reply in my own way. We are told that we do not mean to land you in the Servile State. We say the opposite. We believe the opposite, but as a matter of fact, says Mr. Belloc, you are going into the Servile State. He just reminds me of a man looking over George Bernard Shaw's shoulder when he is writing one of his immortal plays, and without having read the play from the beginning, and without having seen the magnificent ending of the play, he says "Bless me, what is the man scrawling about? There is no play there. I see a few irregular things" and those of us who have had correspondence with Shaw know the very irregular and undecipherable things that look like letters—"I see a few irregular things, but it is no play at all." Of course, the reply that Shaw would immediately make to this man, and the reply that I make to Belloc, is that you never can judge what is happening if you take a process of evolution at any given moment and say "I am just going to study it there." You should begin away back. You evolve towards an end. But, says Mr. Belloc, if my opponent urges that argument I am going to say that is not argument, and I am going to insist upon my opponent drawing a little line here and there, and confining the whole of his argument and attention within this narrow and incomplete field. I submit to Mr. Belloc that if he seriously means to stand by that argument he gives a very good reason why he has been using the

expression Servile State to-night so frequently, with, I submit, so little meaning. Now what does he say? He began quite truly by stating that nobody ever suggested that Socialism meant economic equality. That is perfectly true. Then he made another true statement. He says what we want is sufficiency, which he says is one thing to one man and another thing to another man. That is perfectly true, because sufficiency is not economic at all, but psychological. But psychological sufficiency must always have an economic basis or an economic medium for expressing itself. Then, after having laid down that truth, he departed upon a very characteristic Bellockian error, by saying that this sufficiency was equivalent to a demand that each, one and all, severally and separately, should own his own means of production.

Mr. BELLOC: No.

Mr. MacDONALD: But that is the only argument. That is one of the sticks I have handed over to you to beat my back with when your twenty minutes come. We will see about that. That is the only meaning that I can attach to it, but if Mr. Belloc rejects that interpretation then I will begin with his own argument. You want a sufficiency. Precisely; I agree; that is common ground. How are you going to get it? You cannot possibly get it by each of you owning your own acre of land, your own house, you own bit of Armstrong, Whitworth & Company's machinery, your own Member of Parliament, your own Editor, your own newspaper, and your own constituency. You cannot do it. You might have done it in those delightful primitive days in which my friend Belloc's mind has taken up what, I am sorry to say, seems to be a sort of permanent abode and habitation, but a man of modern mind, modern tendencies, and modern rationality cannot possibly take up that position. What happened in those deplorable days when there was a revolution in mind and in morals—I think that is Belloc's expression; it not, he will correct me in those twenty minutes—what happened in those days when the revolution in mind and in morals started? You emerged not merely from one moral point of view to another, and from one religious form of organisation and belief to another, you also emerged from one economic organisation, one form of economic and industrial organisation, to another, and the one that you went into was one which was characterised by a great mass of capital being used as an economic unity by a great mass of men co-ordinated. . . .

Mr. BELLOC: No.

Mr. MacDONALD: Yes, co-ordinated into a social unit, and whilst your production was co-operative and communal, your

distribution was individualistic on the old-fashioned mediæval lines. What happened was this. You did not have a complete revolution in mind and in morals and in society. You had a piecemeal revolution. You solved the problem of production in a modern way, but you failed to apply your modern minds and circumstances to the problem of distribution. What does the Socialist say? The Socialist says there is no use talking about individualism and production again. When you talk of the common ownership of the means of production, distribution, and exchange, that does not mean that you are dividing it all up into so many parcels and then handing it out over a post-office counter as you get your old age pensions now. Nothing of the kind. It means that you keep it co-ordinated, organised, working co-operatively, and that that thing which Mr. Belloc thinks is an abstraction when it does not mean merely a politician, the community, should own that, control it, and see that it is used for the benefit of the separate individual who is using it as a co-operating factor. That is the Socialist State. And why use in connection with that State the expression Politician? Is it to enlighten you or to mislead you? Is it an accurate description or a prejudiced description? I venture to say that it is used to mislead you, and that it is a prejudiced description. Because why a politician? I am certain that my friend Belloc knows as well as I do that the Socialist State is not going to be only a political State; that is the mistake that ignorant people like Mr. Mallock make, not learned people like Mr. Belloc make. The Socialist State is a State which is not merely political, as the modern State mainly is. It is rapidly becoming something else. It is a State which I at any rate think must always be political but which must also be industrial, and you are going to have the two organisations, the two absolutely different types of organisation, the Industrial State and the Political State, not existing side by side, because that is a false analogy, but interfused one into another, the one impregnating the other, so to speak, the two blended together to make a genuine Democratic State—democratic on its political side, democratic on its industrial side—owning those forms of capital in the use and abuse of which the whole community is more interested than any private individual, and then establishing a system of distribution which will enable the co-operating producer to consume as a self-regarding and self-contained moral and rational individual. Now you cannot bring that about, and you cannot have a clear conception of how it is going to be brought about, unless your mind refuses to go upon political lines and goes upon industrial lines. Instead of the politician

which Mr. Belloc has asked you to think about and to concentrate your attention upon, think of the manager of a successful co-operative business. The blending of Parliament and the Co-operative Union of Manchester must take place.

Mr. Belloc: Heaven help us!

Mr. MacDonald: I knew that that expression was coming. He says "Heaven help us." Well, I think we have not quite come to that yet. I think we can help ourselves, quite apart from Heaven, and my reason for saying that is this, that an intelligent man like Belloc knows all the difficulties in the way. That is why. If we were going blindly on, thinking that our present political condition was the best we could devise, going blindly on thinking the Co-operative Union was the best that could be devised, then Belloc's pessimistic interjection would be perfectly justifiable. But as we see clearly how we are going to amend both, and as there is a vast amount of experience accumulating which will enable us to amend both, and as we are beginning as a matter of actual fact, experiments to amend both, then we have not come yet to the pessimistic exclamation of "Heaven help us." We are helping ourselves, and we are evolving that state of society under which the industrial idea of co-operation and the political idea of representative government can be blended and used for both political and industrial purposes. That is not the Servile State. The Servile State is a State which depends, not upon production at all, but upon consumption. Servility does not depend upon a system under which a man produces, unless his personal liberty happens to be sacrificed to the production, and his personal liberty even then must always be limited by his social personality and not by his more eccentric and individualistic personality. Keeping these things in mind, we then have got to reply to the Servile State idea that under Socialism, whilst the means of production may be held in common, the means of consumption will be held individually, and the man who defines that State as the Servile State is only abusing the English language. That is my State. The final point that I have got here, when I was asked to reply to certain things so that the coming twenty minutes might be filled up, is this. Says Mr. Belloc, we have never confiscated anything yet, and therefore we are no good. Well, we have confiscated a good many things. I will tell you what we have confiscated. We have confiscated a shilling in the £ of Belloc's income. And if he's fortunate enough to have any of his income invested in the Funds, we have confiscated a little bit more. If he is fortunate enough, from an economic point of view, to own building land round about London, we have

confiscated more still. If he is fortunate enough to have an income of fifteen thousand a year we have confiscated still more. I congratulate my friend that from his economic resources he can shake that mournful head of his so as to indicate that he has been touched on all these points. But, he says, when you do all your work, all your public work, your municipal trams, and so on, you only do it on borrowed capital. Precisely. How long does borrowed capital exist? It does not exist more than twenty years at the very outside. His argument is not quite sound, but I am not going to go into details. I am going to assume it, which after all is the best way to deal with it. I am going to assume that his argument is sound. Even if we borrow for the purpose of building our schools with bricks and mortar, what happens? The ground is ours when the loans are paid off; the bricks and mortar are ours when the loans are paid off; and if we go on sufficiently long—mark you, I am not using this as my argument, but only showing that his argument is unsound—if we go on sufficiently long the process of borrowing is a terminable process, and the weight of the borrowed money is a constantly diminishing weight, until even on that line, if we adopt it, an intelligent statesman will at last bring you to Socialism and clear the borrowing out altogether. Really, from the point of view of the debate, I am prepared to leave it there. I believe I still have a quarter of an hour, but so far as the real points were concerned, and so far as the attack upon Socialism was concerned, I think I have made my reply. I want to know, however, what Belloc exactly has got in his mind. He talks about the Servile State. What does he mean by the Servile State? He said he defined it, but he did not. He says the Servile State is a State under which the means of production are not held by the people, but that is not the Servile State. I might claim that that is the Collectivist State. Will he tell me what is the difference between that Collectivist State and the Servile State?

Mr. BELLOC: Oh yes.

Mr. MACDONALD: Then he tells us that he goes back to the Middle Ages, to the days of the Guilds and so on. Will he tell us how it is possible under modern conditions, with factories and factory production and large capitalism, to go back to the conditions under which the Guilds flourished? Will he tell me exactly what idea of production he has got, what idea of capitalism he has got, and what idea of Socialist organisation he has got? Will he tell me how he is going to build that up, how he is going to move into that from the present state of

society in which he finds himself? If he is going to upset the factory system, will he tell me how he is going to do it? If he is going to break up co-ordinated and unified capital, will he tell me how? If he is going to divide up his units so that he adopts the Guild idea, will he tell me how much of the Guild idea he will adopt, and what sort of a social fabric he is going to create at the end? As a matter of fact, I contend first of all that Belloc's line of argument is unscientific, because he does not allow for the evolutionary process, the working out of the Socialist idea through time. The words he uses are mere labels and do not signify reality at all, like the expression Collectivism, as he uses it, on the one hand, and the expression Servile and Servility, as he uses it, on the other—meaningless. On the other hand he has not told us where he himself stands and what cure he proposes to offer for the various social evils with which we are faced. I maintain that the Socialist idea of Collectivism, of taking what we call capital—and I use the word because I do not want to confuse and explain issues—I maintain that the Socialist idea that you must have co-operative production by massed capital, by massed labour, and then alongside of that that you must create some system of distribution, which Socialism can do and tells you how you can do, is the only rational, the only possible, and the only hopeful way of solving the social difficulties with which we are now faced.

Mr. BELLOC: Every institution is fitted to the nation in which it arises.

ONE IN THE GALLERY: Speak up.

Mr. BELLOC: I shall begin quite differently now. I don't want to be like a lawyer, but if you will allow me I cannot help being precise. It is my nature. I affirmed the following proposition: "That the unreality of the Collectivist ideal is apparent from the fact that contemporary Collectivist effort is leading, not to Collectivism, but to the Servile State." I then defined this abstraction, the Servile State, in order that my words might have some meaning. Since I am told that my definition was nebulous I will repeat it. The Servile State is that in which a portion of the community is permanently dispossessed of the means of production and is compelled to labour and to produce for the advantage, not only of themselves, but also of those privileged beings who retain the means of production. And when I say compelled I do not mean more or less elbowed into such labour, but compelled to it by law. For instance, by Lloyd George's law a man may pay fourpence a week out of that £9,200,000, week

after week and year after year, out of his eighteen shillings a week at the docks, but there may come a day when he does not accept employment under the terms offered by the Labour Exchanges, in which case he sacrifices the sum. I think I have defined myself clearly. That is the Servile State. I did not say it was a bad thing. All of us have ancestors who owned slaves, and all of us have ancestors who were slaves. There is no man in this room who, two thousand years ago, had not an ancestor who owned slaves, or an ancestress, and there is not a man in this room who had not one who was a slave or a slaveress, a she-slave. I do not say that the Servile State is a bad thing. The society in which Greek tragedy arose was a far better society than that of modern England, and if you say "I like a slave state; I am asking for a slave state," I should say "I thoroughly understand you; go ahead. I differ, because I am one of the old guard; I believe in God, and so forth; but go ahead and make your slave state and say that everybody shall have bread and butter and food, and do not bother too much whether the capitalist class is secure in its predominance so long as the servile class is secure in its mere sufficiency." But Mr. MacDonald did not meet that point. He said I was obscure. I wish I was. I will re-define myself as clearly as possible. I will begin again. The Servile State is one in which a portion of the inhabitants of the State, dispossessed of the means of production, are secure in sufficiency, without the dispossession of the capitalist or means-of-production-owning class. Is that clear? I ask Mr. MacDonald in the clearest way this. You have been at it for seventy years. Our Lord—if you will pardon me the term; I almost said Our Blessed Lord—died about the year 33 or the year 37. The Neronian persecution took place, I think, about a generation later, and about a hundred years later the thing we now call the Catholic Church was fully grounded. Where is your Socialism? You have had about seventy years to Collectivise property. Are you getting nearer or farther? When I was a boy of nineteen and did not know the world, I went through the gas strike and the great dock strike of 1889, with John Burns, by the way, incredible as it may seem. I did not meet him much; I won't pretend to be a follower of a much more important man than myself; but I met him once or twice. Though my motives are the same to-day as they were then, I cannot but look back upon that time and say to myself that we are farther from actual confiscation than we were then. We are putting water in our wine, and we are getting contented, and part of our content is the putting of £9,200,000 of direct taxation upon the proletariat of England. What have you transferred; what have you begun

to transfer? What step have you taken, MacDonald—you and yours—in the direction of transferring the means of production from those who own into the hands of those who do not own, individually or collectively?

Mr. MACDONALD: Income tax.

Mr. BELLOC: No. Income tax does not fall upon capital; that is the point. I own capital, and I own land. You have not touched my capital and my land. He said he had confiscated so much out of a shilling of my income. I despair when on an economic matter requiring a clear definition and clear thought—a scientific matter—a leader of economic thought comes forward and calls that the confiscation of the means of production. You have not advanced one step towards getting the land or towards getting the capital. You have in some cases taken capital by mistake, as in the unfortunate licensing clauses of Lloyd George's remarkable Budget. But you have not applied it to buying the means of production. You spend it on salaries to the new people of the Bureaucracy that you are creating. If you were to earmark—recommend this to him, that he will earmark the death duties of 1912, that he will move that they be earmarked for the purchase of the railways that run south of London. If he will do that I shall approve, because railways I—in common with Justinian, who did not know about railways but who knew about roads—agree in regarding as things normally national. Then he will at least have transferred the means of production—at any rate, capital—from the hands of private people and put certain means of production by something very like confiscation in the hands of the State. Now there has not been a trace of such a policy in any country in Europe to the present day. Mr. MacDonald says borrowed capital will be repaid shortly by the terms of its loan. He says we are paying back. It is true of every individual loan that it carries a sinking fund, but that shows nothing: the point is whether the total indebtedness of Communities to Capital is rising or no. Members of this audience, some few of you may have passed through that experience that has coloured the whole of my life, in which you had to borrow, and I will ask you: Is it your own experience that the creditor is especially kind at the point where his investment begins to be difficult? Give him an inch—does he not take an ell? When a man borrows and puts a sinking fund on to his borrowing, if he is a capable man, still with power, he may ultimately pay back his private debt. Many have done so. What are your Collectivities under the so-called Socialist pressure of the Socialist politicians doing? Why, the debt is increasing and

increasing. It has increased to such a point that now the investor is beginning to say: "We won't lend you any more." Where is your sinking fund then? You borrow money for pageants, you borrow money for what Ruskin called "fireworks," you borrow money for mistakes in tramlines—even those poor devils of tramlines that have to carry the whole burden of the argument, even they sometimes do not pay. You are receiving 1.8 per cent. at the best; you are paying 3.2 per cent. at the lowest. I am talking of what is, not of what might be. If there were an infinite power of borrowing always with a good investment, you would, of course, at last pay off, but do you think the capitalist class is going to allow you to do that? You are going to take their wealth without fighting, without initiative? I used the phrase "Heaven help us." I won't say it would need something more than Heaven, but it would need a great effort on the part of Heaven. You won't get hold of the means of production save on the barricades. But you have not begun to do it even in your legislation. I shall believe this argument of repayment when I see the debt diminishing, but I do not. It is increasing, and that debt, vaguely called Municipal Debt, is owed to somebody. To whom? To the capitalist, whom, by the way, one may never attack by name.

ONE IN THE AUDIENCE: What about the National Debt?

Mr. BELLOC: That is exactly in the same category. When it is spent on railways, with a sinking fund, it is wisely spent; when it is spent on fireworks it is unwisely spent, but in every case it is owed to the capitalist class and is a millstone round the neck of the producer. Now I have exhausted twelve or thirteen minutes, and I want Mr. MacDonald in his second reply to get to that precise point. If we are getting towards Collectivism, well and good. Let him give me instances of it. But if he says we are not getting towards the Servile State, I will give him a few instances which will make him think. Take Western Europe as a whole. The other day the Rothschilds in France quarrelled with their workmen. The Socialist Press called the Rothschilds in this connection the "Compagnie du Nord." They quarrelled with their workmen over twopence a week. I should not say this if they could send me to prison for saying it—I am taking care not to tell you the whole truth. They quarrelled with their workmen over twopence a week. The workmen came out on strike, and they thought—poor innocents!—that their right as free men to work or not to work was an unbreakable weapon. "We," they said, "hold the means of communication, at least between one Province of France and the Capital.. We

will come out, and we must win." Did they? A politician and a leader of the proletariat and a strong Socialist of the name of Briand ordered them under pain of death to go back and work. He did not order the Rothschilds under pain of death to give up that twopence. I am not a Socialist, but if I had been at that conference and I had been Briand, I do not think Rothschild would have enjoyed his dinner again. You see what I mean? Armed with a human motive, nerved with a human purpose, you can do something; with these German-Jewish abstractions you can do nothing at all. I ask again: What have you Socialists done—how far have you proceeded? I want Mr. MacDonald to answer that. Have we, as a fact, come any nearer to his ideal; have we not come nearer to the Servile State? In the four minutes remaining, let me say—and I shall only occupy two of them—there is another argument, and I am astonished that Mr. MacDonald has not used it. I paid him the compliment of saying he was Scotch, and upon my soul when I hear him talking I think he must be from Huntingdonshire, which was, as this intelligent and well-educated audience knows, for a long time a Scotch fief. There is an argument, and I wonder he did not use it. He might have said "Yes, we are working for the Servile State; but "when we have produced the Servile State then you will see we shall have the Collectivist State as the next stage." I ask you as a mere matter of human psychology how the one can lead to the other, and I ask him to take that point. You may have created a state of society in which, from one generation to another, the minority are used to their confirmation and security in the means of production, with all its advantages, and a large majority are used to and secure in what they need for their own little lives, but not to ownership and not to the responsibility that comes with ownership. When you have produced that State, have you produced a national psychology which will lead to revolt and the taking away of the means of production from the rich? Of course not. You have produced a nation comfortable and used to servile conditions. This may be very good. I am not blaming it. But you have gone right out of the path that leads to collectivism. I happen to believe that if property were well distributed, you would automatically, as is proved to be the case ever since history began, have arising in the organism of human society co-operative institutions each safeguarding itself against too great competition. But I am not debating that to-night. I am telling you that the drift of actual, so-called Socialist legislation is not towards Socialism at all, but towards this established, confirmed, and secure division

between owners and non-owners, which I predicate as the great danger of modern industrial society.

Mr MacDONALD: I am very sorry that I have to go back to the Servile State again. The proposition which Mr. Belloc is affirming to-night is, as he quoted, "That the unreality of the Collectivist ideal is apparent from the fact that contemporary Collectivist effort is leading, not to Collectivism, but to the Servile State." I asked him to define what he meant by the Servile State. He says it is a State in which a small section of the community own the means of production . . . .

Mr. BELLOC: Are confirmed in the ownership of the means of production.

Mr. MacDONALD: But if they are confirmed in the ownership, do not they own it? . . . in which a small section of the community own the means of production, and if Belloc likes I will add, and are confirmed in their ownership. That is precisely the state of things to-day.

Mr. BELLOC: It is really putting my words wrong. I added: "And those who do not own are confirmed in sufficiency and security under the owners."

Mr. MacDONALD: But the Servile State does not require that the slaves should be confirmed in sufficiency. What Belloc means to do is to create something which is very special to his own ideas and then call that something the Servile State; but never mind. Let us have it. That is precisely what is happening at the present moment, and it is against that that the whole of the Collectivist movement is being aimed. What is happening? How can Mr. Belloc assume that Collectivism and that definition of the Servile State of his are one and the same thing, when as a matter of fact the whole trend of modern Collectivism is to put an end to the ownership of the means of production by a small section of the community? Mr. Belloc says: "Show me what you are doing for Collectivism." Very well; the question is perfectly simply answered, but first of all let me ask Belloc whether he precisely understands what kind of contribution Socialism requires at the present moment. He might have come to me if we had both been living in 1831—he an old Tory and myself, say, a Radical—and he might have come and challenged me with all his eloquence and with all his falsity of logic, in 1831, and said: "I challenge you to show me one single step you have taken towards the extension of the franchise in this country. You have been working for it since 1789; this is 1831; that is

about 60 years"—(A voice: "Forty years"*)—"and now," he would say, "after all this agitation, after all this strife, you are just as far away from it as ever you were before." Is there a single piece of finished work about which precisely the same thing cannot be said? He turns and he says he was surprised I did not reply that through the Servile State we are coming to Collectivism. I did not reply that because I deny the reality of his definition of the Servile State. I did as a matter of fact reply on precisely the lines he said he expected a reply, but which he thought he did not get, when I instanced the writing of the play of the friend in front of me to my left-hand side (Mr. G. Bernard Shaw). Now before you get Collectivism you have got to get a Collectivist intention and will in the people outside. Does Belloc mean to say that at the present moment there is not more Collectivist intention, enormously more, in this country than there was when he took part in the great dock strike behind Burns? Why, nowadays the great difficulty that we have all got to experience is that you cannot get anybody to stand upon theory against Collectivist and Socialist ideas. Everything that is done now, whether by reactionary people or by so-called progressive people, is being done upon the assumption that the community as a whole has got power, has got wealth, has got responsibility, and ought to take co-operative action. Confiscation, says Belloc, is further away now than it was when he was a boy of nineteen. I am glad of it, because if Mr. Belloc and the handful of people who associate with him and share his opinions—I differentiate between the handful of people who share his opinions and the vast number of people who delight in reading about his opinions, of which I am one—if Belloc imagines that he is going to measure the rapidity of the coming of Socialism or Collectivism by the amount of confiscation that is being done, then of course he and I disagree absolutely and fundamentally. We are not going to get to Socialism by confiscation, as he calls it, unless he means by confiscation what I mean by income tax. What did the State do to entitle it to claim from Mr. Belloc the money that he thought was his own? Absolutely nothing—from the point of view of the person who believes in confiscation, mark you. The State stepped in and said: "Mr. Belloc, you pay your money, your property, your income into your bank every year to a certain amount. I will confiscate one-fourth or one-fifth of it, as the case may be, and I take it to myself." What is the use of Mr. Belloc using the word con-

* Mr. Belloc would not have been good at mathematics.—J.R.M.

fiscation if he is not going to apply it when it actually takes place? That is not all. The whole of our municipal experiments are going on and have been created—our parks, our municipal housing schemes, our municipal tramway schemes; aye, even this scheme of insurance, imperfect as it is and as we know it is, a scheme of insurance for which a Liberal Government is responsible, and not a Collectivist Government; nevertheless, ten years ago that scheme, with all its faults and all its shortcomings, would have been far too Collectivist for even a Liberal Government to have brought into operation. In fact, Belloc's argument narrows itself down to this. He says: "To-day you have not got Socialism." Well, nobody has ever said we had. And when you work it down, analyse the argument to its contents, and give it an accurate meaning, that is all it comes to, that after so many years of agitation, and organisation, and legislation, we have not yet got Socialism. But why? Because you are in a minority. Mr. Belloc does not only want confiscation. That is a pretty tall order, and it is a very queer order. He says he is not a Socialist; his speech shows that, and his criticism of Socialism shows it. He will have a chance of becoming a Socialist when he ceases to imagine that Socialism is going to come by confiscation. But he does not only want confiscation; he also wants a minority to rule the majority, because only under that political condition would it be possible for the Collectivist minority to-day to show you any pure scheme or experiment in Collectivism. What is happening and what is bound to happen? It is no use people living in a social vacuum. What you have to do is this. You have to remember where your Socialism started, under what conditions it started, and you have to remember the transforming process, both in its kind and in its nature, which has to take place before your Socialist movement can really triumph over the conditions that it wants to take the place of. You start from capitalism, the ordinary capitalism, the content of which we all know perfectly well. We start as a critical organisation, very crude at first, using absolute expressions, which we by-and-by apply under capitalism, not under Socialism, which we by-and-by apply in the actual world, not in the ideal world which we have constructed in our own minds; and in the application of those ideas of ours we are limited, not by ourselves, but by you. We are limited, not by Socialist opinion, but by opinion outside, by Mr. Belloc, for instance, who is not a Socialist at all. We have got to take into account all the possibilities and only the possibilities which are at our disposal for practical legislative purposes, and if when the experiments that

we can conduct are being made a critic should rise up and say they are not perfect, well, of course they are not perfect; they are just as much as society will stand, and their imperfections of to-day will be smoothed out by amendments and changes to-morrow, and there is not a single Socialist with any common sense who believes in any other method except that.

Mr. BELLOC: What about the railways?

Mr. MACDONALD: Well, take the railways. Thirty years ago the railways were the subject of an enormously entrenched organisation of private interests. What has happened? We have just had a committee reporting, consisting not of Socialists, not even of Labour men—there was only one Labour man on the committee—but consisting of railway magnates, capitalists, business men, and that committee has issued a report which was published three days ago and which foreshadowed in every page railway nationalisation. Take canals. We have had a canal commission sitting since 1906, with one Socialist upon it; Chairman, Lord Shuttleworth; Lord Farrer a Member, Sir John Brunner a member, and men of that type. What has happened? Your committee has reported that you ought to have an efficient canal service, that you have not got an efficient canal service, and that if you are going to get an efficient canal service, you have got to nationalise the whole service and find the money for it. These things have got to be done. You have got to change public opinion before you can re-write history and change the social organisation of the country, and I claim that that is being done. Mr. Belloc knows very well—I think at any rate he does, sitting as a Member of Parliament—that time after time when we discussed industrial and socialist things the trouble always was that there was a certain section in the House of Commons calling themselves social reformers who always tried their best to say as much as we said. Why? Because they were beginning to be conscious of the fact that the whole mental outlook of our people is changing. As a matter of fact, we are going through precisely the same revolution, or a revolution of the same kind, as that to which Belloc referred in his opening speech as the revolution of the Middle Ages. From being individualists we are becoming Socialists; socialistic first of all, and then Socialists. We are going to ensure againt unemployment first of all. That is the first step.

Mr. BELLOC interjected a remark.

Mr. MACDONALD: Yes, it may be expensive work, but we are not living in heaven.

Mr. BELLOC: No, I said at the expense of the workers.

Mr. MacDonald: It may be, but even then that is only a superficial view to take of it. If I am going to create, even at the expense of the workers, a system of social responsibility which will evolve by a law of its own being into a real system of social responsibility, financed from social sources, and not used as a burden upon the workers, then I am going to take and make the beginning that public opinion to-day will allow me, and when we get into Committee on this Bill we are going to change some of the Bill. I venture to say that if this debate were to take place six months from now instead of to-night . . . .

Mr. Belloc: I will take it on.

Mr. MacDonald: And I will be delighted to accept. I was saying that if this debate had taken place six months from now instead of to-night you would have found that as a result of the Labour Party criticism, the Collectivist criticism, both from the Labour Party and outside the Labour Party, this scheme that we would then be considering would be far better moulded in a Collectivist likeness than it is at present. Of course, Mr. Belloc can criticise what is known as Socialistic Liberalism or Social Reform Liberalism. So can I. So we all do, and so do the Socialists all round. But the difference between him and myself is this, that he will accept nothing as Socialism except the finished product, whereas I say, that that is not the problem at all. The problem is: Are you going first of all in the direction of changing public opinion, and secondly, of applying that changed public opinion to your social work? Are you going out in a Socialist direction? I maintain that in thirty years the change has been enormous. No man can close his eyes to the fact that it exists, and consequently so far as Collectivism is concerned my contention is that first of all it is alien even to Belloc's own definition of the Servile State, that as a matter of fact his Servile State is not being created, but that the real fact is that Collectivism is being steadily applied to transform capitalism and in that transforming stage, that sort of transition stage, it is bound to be badly applied, it is bound to be imperfect, it is bound in some respects to be disappointing, but there beyond the change Collectivism is coming stronger and stronger and stronger and will ultimately emerge triumphant.

Mr. BELLOC: The last five minutes of this type of debate, which, like silk, is imported from France, hardly ever has to do with arguments in this country, but with re-stating one's opinions. The gist of Mr. MacDonald's reply, I think I may say, was this. We have not got a Socialist State, but all these

various moves towards giving the proletariat security and *not* capital, and the employers security and *not* confiscation, are moves towards the Socialist State. That is evolution. I submit, I only submit, that in my philosophy, and only in my philosophy and that of the handful of men who agree with me, there is a difference between south and north, between dark and light, between plus and minus; and if such differences exist, then the whole point of the Servile State is that it is walking away from the Collectivist State. You are producing, by things like the Insurance Bill, a state of society in which England wants to help the poor, in which people feel kind towards the poor, and in which people are willing to put £9,200,000 burden of direct taxation on the shoulders of the poor, but you are emphatically not approaching towards the confiscation of the means of production. Mr. MacDonald says he does not want to confiscate the means of production. Tell it to your children, and to your children's children. He is going to get the means of production out of the hands of the rich without confiscation, by Parliamentary means, by good-fellowship and practical understanding of men and of human affairs. Twice to-night I have used the phrase: "Heaven help us." I add: Heaven help the human intellect if such confused thought can determine affairs. It is true that you can so affect the gradual economic processes of society—that is quite true—as to canalise them in this or that direction. It is true that a great statesman possessed of great powers, perhaps almost of despotic powers, can save society by that method. It is true, and I grant that fully, that you can produce the Collectivist State in that fashion. You could, by perpetually taxing income up to the breaking point, and always transferring the proceeds to the purchase of the means of production, begin to produce the Socialist State. But my whole point is that there is not a sign of its coming into being. So-called "Socialistic" legislation takes nineteen to twenty millions pounds in death duties from the rich in a year, and then, instead of transforming it into nationally-owned land or capital, pays it away in salaries to the hungry people who hang upon the party system and upon their subordinates: the politicians pay it to bureaucrats. Bureaucrats are very useful, but they are not the means of production. Why does not Mr. MacDonald move (what I am perfectly prepared to move) whenever in the House of Commons you can move anything, and he is a leader of a party and can do it—the earmarking of the death duties for the purpose of purchasing the railways? Why not?

One in the Audience: It would cost eleven millions.

Mr. BELLOC: Why do they call it Collectivism or the national ownership of the means of production to take this money and spend it on salaries? Obviously it is not. Now there is another point which is well worth emphasising. Mr. MacDonald appeals to what is of real value in this debate, namely, experience in the House of Commons. I had five years of it. I left it voluntarily, and if I return it will be more voluntarily still. He tells me that I had experience, sitting there as a Radical, that the trouble was to prevent reactionary people from stopping this flood of modern Socialist feeling. It was nothing of the sort.

Mr. MACDONALD: I did not say that. I said expressing themselves, that when reactionary people wanted to fight us they expressed themselves in the language we used.

Mr. BELLOC: I am to blame, and Mr. MacDonald is quite right. The trouble was, as one may say familiarly, to pin them down. They always used our terminology, they admitted the existence of land, and they were good enough to say that machinery was to be discovered in this world. Do you know what it is impossible to get through the House of Commons? I will tell you, and with that I shall sit down. You may think it has nothing to do with this debate, but I have only two minutes, and not even that by rights, in which to tell you the following anecdote. If you think it does not apply to the debate, then you are of a different lineage and atavism from myself. A law was proposed by Mr. Herbert Gladstone, now Lord Gladstone—that great name is now dignified with a peerage—and that law is now being administered by that son of the people Mr. Winston Churchill, and that other independent democrat Mr. Masterman, and what does that law say? That law says that any man guilty three times of petty larceny, stealing a pocket handkerchief, poaching, getting a few eggs out of a nest, after the full and maximum sentence which the law allows him, may be kept in prison for five years apart from the company of all human beings and apart from human speech, and womenfolk—in Hell—to teach him not to steal pocket handkerchiefs and birds' nests. The first man who was sent to do these extra five years was a man who stole an india-rubber mat. The mat was worth three-and-six. You talk about the weakening of the old defence of property; you talk of the advance of Socialist ideas which denies the right to such monopolies. But which of you opposed that law? I fought it in the House of Commons—God remember it for me at the last day—tooth and nail. I got an indefinite sentence down to five years—but when it came to dividing against that infamous

thing, which stinks in the nostrils of what is left of Christendom in Europe—that infamous thing—I could get no one in the House of Commons to "tell" with me. That is the House of Commons.

Mr. MACDONALD: I want to begin where Belloc ended, The picture he has given of the House of Commons is absolutely inaccurate and altogether a caricature.

Mr. BELLOC: Who "told" with me on that question?

Mr. MACDONALD: The question that he has raised finally is one which cannot be dealt with in five minutes, but the theory of detention which was embodied in that Bill . . . .

Mr. BELLOC: For attacks on property.

Mr. MACDONALD: My friend's back was turned to me and his voice was thrown so much up that I could not hear his final point, but I understood it elaborated the case of the man who stole a mat. That is all I am clear about. The man who stole the mat did not begin by stealing that mat. As a matter of fact the theory that was contained in that Bill which was described so delightfully by Belloc is a theory which beyond everything is a Collectivist theory. The trouble is that first of all it is said by Belloc that Collectivism is coming unwillingly to the Servile State—and by some of his friends behind—and when I say that this Bill embodied Collectivist theories about punishment he says: "Of course it is, because Collectivism is servility." Well, they cannot have it both ways. But this is only an aside. The fact of the matter is that if Belloc had raised the point earlier and not in the last five minutes, it could be shown that this Bill, as a matter of fact, does embody a very sound idea. It may be abused, undoubtedly, as Socialism can be abused, as everything that applies to our complicated state of society in a general way can be abused, because we are getting further and further away from the time when our legislation can be so precise that a man with some imagination can never caricature it at all and imagine circumstances under which its application would be absolutely absurd. I do not want you to believe for a moment that the picture of the House of Commons, given by Mr. Belloc, is at all a reliable one. Equally unreliable is his statement about what Collectivism is doing. His definition is finally that what we are doing is that we are not providing the proletariat with its own capital, but we are only giving it security. As a matter of fact, the Collectivist idea, and the Collectivist impulse, and the Collectivist demand, which can only be effective when there is a Collectivist majority behind it, is to give the proletariat the capital which

is necessary in order to enable it to make a living. It is going to be given in a Collectivist sense, in a co-operative form, but nevertheless, each individual in the community will have his capital and not merely his security. But there was a light that Belloc threw upon his position, which he had not thrown upon it before, by an aside phrase. He seems to assume that if we improve the condition of the people, give them what he calls security, then you are somehow or other reducing the revolutionary capacity. That is altogether wrong. The fact of the matter is that if you keep your people down in slums you are just supplying the instruments for the hands of the vilest form of reaction in this country. Belloc's experience and mine have been rather diverse, even under the same circumstances apparently, but I think it has been the same in this respect. Everyone who has fought a constituency, who has propagated Socialism in the midst of the poorest section of the community, knows that that section is so low down that it has ceased to have any ideals. You can parade your armies of unemployed men in the streets and talk grandiloquently about confiscation and so on, but it amounts to nothing. The thing that you have got to organise is the intelligent, thinking man and woman, who have got the capacity to imagine a better state of things, and if by your Insurance schemes, and by your various other steps that Belloc describes as being mere steps to give more security, you can give men more of the security which means more calmness of mind, which enables them to see clearer the social conditions under which they live, then I say those secure people will be far quicker to come and give us our majority which we want before we can realise the Socialism that Belloc wants to see realised whilst we are in a minority; and so on that fundamental point I join issue with him. We want to make the people more secure and to give them more leisure; we want to give them better goods; we want them to talk less about confiscation, because my experience of the man who does that is, that he is a man who is prepared to confiscate even the possessions of his own comrades and to go over to the other side. My idea of Socialism—and it is the Collectivist idea—is that Socialism is going to come through betterment, not through worsement—that we are going up steadily and uninterruptedly to Socialism, not down and then up with a jump—a most absurd though a very delightful idea.

ONE IN THE AUDIENCE: What about John Brown?

Mr. MacDONALD: The problem of John Brown is still an open problem, and perhaps my friend in the audience will go

home quietly and discuss it in the light of more recent enquiries and investigations into the effect of the John Brown rising. However, we will leave that on one side. The final point is Belloc's idea of confiscation. He says: "Why don't you earmark the £19,000,000 taken in Death Duties for the purpose of what he calls confiscating the railways." I thought there was no programme but the programme of confiscation for Belloc. He wants me to go to the House of Commons next week, when railway stock is high, and put down a resolution that the £19,000,000 ought to be set aside for buying out the railways. What would happen? At the end of the week railway stock would be so high that your nineteen millions would not nearly touch it. I will tell you what we will do about railway stock.

Mr. BELLOC: This is worth hearing.

Mr. MacDONALD: We will continue the process that we have begun and we will depress the exploiting value of railway stock by imposing taxation upon railway incomes, and then when the time suits us and when you are ready we will consider both taxation and purchase, but not one single moment before the time is ready and before the time is ripe, and that is not now.

Mr. BELLOC: No, and it never will be.

Mr. MacDONALD: It is all very well to say that. We are here on a serious debate. If it is a question of smart reply then we can say to-morrow it will happen, but as serious politicians and as people who want to do something and not merely to talk grandiloquently, you know very well that if the proposition that Belloc advances as a serious contribution to the expenditure of public income and to the nationalisation of railways was taken up by us now it would lead to absolute disaster from both points of view, but that before we are ready for that step to be taken we have to take certain preliminaries, and I can assure you we are doing it. Therefore, again I want to come back to the fundamental position. You have got to criticise Collectivism as a growing concern. You have got to criticise it as a dynamic proposition and not merely as a static one, and it is because Belloc has emphasised it as a static one . . . .

Mr. BELLOC: No.

Mr. MacDONALD: And not as a dynamic one that he has first of all confused its present operations with the Servile State, and secondly declined to see that in the change of public

opinion and in the new mass of public experience a steadily-growing Collectivism will at last dominate the whole state of society in which we live.

Mr. BELLOC: It is my very pleasant duty to move a vote of thanks, as is customary, to the Chair. There is only one original way of doing it, and I have done it myself at least a hundred times, and that is to say that the functions of a Chairman are the most unpleasing of those that anyone can undertake at a great meeting. It is perfectly true. He is quite close to the speakers, he hears the thing in full blast, he is not allowed to say what he thinks, and if there is a row he is concerned. Therefore, I move a vote of thanks to the Chairman.

Mr. MACDONALD: I would like to be allowed to second that motion. I hope the Chairman never trembled in his shoes during the whole of the evening, and I hope he will be able to give both Belloc and myself a testimony of good behaviour in spite of the way in which we have been going hammer and tongs at each other.

The resolution was carried by acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN: I have just to thank you for passing that vote of thanks and to say that I think we have had the most glorious evening; and I hope we shall all be present six months hence to hear the end of this dialectical battle.

The proceedings then terminated.

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